

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 p.m. in the Ballroom at the Sheraton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Richard M. Daley and his wife, Margaret; Rev. Willie Barrow of Operation PUSH; Emil Jones, president, Illinois State Senate; Gary LaPaille, chair, Illinois Democratic Party; and James Houlihan, Cook County assessor.

Remarks at the Funeral Service for Henry Oren Grisham in Hope, Arkansas

June 26, 1997

Reverend Hight, Duayne and Conrad and Falva and Myra and all the family, we come here to celebrate the life of one of the most truly remarkable people I have ever known, a man without wealth or power, without position or any pretense, who was, nonetheless, loved, admired, respected because he was smart and wise, profoundly good, and I might add, very funny.

There will be a lot of tears shed in the family section today, and you might say, well, how could you cry that much for a man who had God's gift of 92 years? Because he was forever young, and we wish he'd lived to be 192.

Everyone who ever knew him had a story about him, about hunting or fishing or farming, about sharing a meal or swapping a tale. One of the young men at the funeral home came up to me this morning, just before we came out and said, "You know, he always kept me up. He made me laugh."

One of the members of the family said he was the salt of the Earth and the spice of life. Everyone who talks about him has clear, vivid memories of his wit and his wisdom and, I might add, his remarkable ability to be both brutally honest and always kind.

When I was a young boy, badly in need of a hand up and a little kindness and wisdom, whenever I was at his house and Ollie's, I always felt at home. But he always treated everybody that way. After I became a grown man, he only called me one time, in our whole life together, just once, to tell me that in 1979, a year before all the experts said it, that I could not be reelected Governor because I had made people mad. And I said, "Well, what do you think I ought to do about it?" He said, "Tell them you made a mistake

and undo it, for goodness sake." I said, "I can't do that." He said, "Good, after the next election, you'll have a lot more time to spend with me." [Laughter] And he was right.

After Ollie got sick and died, he still continued to drive around and be active. And I told Reverend Hight this morning the funny story he told me. In the last few years, he used to take two ladies who were older than he was, in their nineties, driving once a week. He said, "Nobody else would go take them out, so I would just go take them out once a week and drive them around. We have a grand time." He was about 87 at the time. And I said, "Do you like these older women?" He said, "You know, I do. It seems like they're a little more settled." [Laughter]

The great poet, William Wordsworth, said that the last, best hope of a good man's life are the little unremembered acts of kindness and love. I'll bet you every person here today who ever met that man has an act of kindness and love that you remember.

He really did the things that matter most in life very well. He was a great husband, a great father, a great grandfather, a great uncle. He was a great friend. My most vivid memory of him, I think, will always be after Ollie got sick and they had to put her in a place where she could be cared for. And he was going through this awful period when she was failing, and he loved her so much. I stopped to see him one night in his house, and we were all alone there. We talked and shot the breeze for a long time. We laughed, and he told stories and everything was just normal. And finally, it was real late, and I had to drive back to Little Rock, and I said, "Buddy, I've got to go." He said, "Okay." I was on my way out the door, and he grabbed me by the arm, and I turned around, and he had tears in his eyes—it was the only time I ever saw them—and I said, "This is really hard, isn't it?" And he smiled, and he said, "You know, it is. But when I married her, I signed on for the whole load, and most of it's been pretty good." I have never heard a better testament of love and devotion than that.

So I say of his great life, all of it was more than pretty good. If our country and our world had more people like Henry Oren Grisham, how much better it would be, how

many more children would have a happy childhood, how much more peace and harmony there would be.

Conrad's poem said it all, and I'm pretty sure God heard it.

Thank you. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:20 a.m. at the Brazzel/Oak Crest Chapel. Henry Oren Grisham was the President's uncle. In his remarks, the President referred to Rev. I.V. Hight, pastor, Unity Baptist Church and Mr. Grisham's late wife, Ollie, his sons, Duayne and Conrad, and his daughters Falva Grisham Lively and Myra Grisham Irvin.

Remarks to the United Nations Special Session on Environment and Development in New York City

June 26, 1997

Thank you very much. Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, ladies and gentlemen: Five years ago in Rio, the nations of the world joined together around a simple but revolutionary proposition, that today's progress must not come at tomorrow's expense.

In our era, the environment has moved to the top of the international agenda because how well a nation honors it will have an impact, for good or ill, not only on the people of that nation but all across the globe. Preserving the resources we share is crucial not only for the quality of our individual environments and health but also to maintain stability and peace within nations and among them. As the father of conservation in our Nation, John Muir, said, "When we try to pick anything out by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

In the years since Rio, there has been real progress in some areas. Nations have banned the dumping of radioactive wastes in the ocean and reduced marine pollution from sources on land. We're working to protect the precious coral reefs, to conserve threatened fish, to stop the advance of deserts. At the Cairo Conference on Population and Development, we reaffirmed the crucial importance of cooperative family planning efforts to long-term sustainable development.

Here in America, we have worked to clean up a record number of our toxic dumps, and we intend to clean 500 more over the next 4 years. We passed new laws to better protect our water, created new national parks and monuments, and worked to harmonize our efforts for environmental protection, economic growth, and social improvement, aided by a distinguished Council on Sustainable Development.

Yesterday I announced the most far-reaching efforts to improve air quality in our Nation in 20 years, cutting smog levels dramatically and, for the first time ever, setting standards to lower the levels of the fine particles in the atmosphere that form soot. In America, the incidence of childhood asthma has been increasing rapidly. It is now the single biggest reason our children are hospitalized. These measures will help to change that, to improve health of people of all ages, and to prevent as many as 15,000 premature deaths a year. Still, we here have much more to do, especially in reducing America's contribution to global climate change.

The science is clear and compelling: We humans are changing the global climate. Concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are at their highest levels in more than 200,000 years, and climbing sharply. If the trend is not changed, scientists expect the seas to rise 2 feet or more over the next century. In America, that means 9,000 square miles of Florida, Louisiana, and other coastal areas will be flooded. In Asia, 17 percent of Bangladesh, land on which 6 million people now live, will be lost. Island chains such as the Maldives will disappear from the map, unless we reverse the predictions.

Climate changes will disrupt agriculture, cause severe droughts and floods and the spread of infectious diseases, which will be a big enough problem for us under the best of circumstances in the 21st century. There could be 50 million or more cases of malaria a year. We can expect more deaths from heat stress. Just 2 years ago, here in the United States in the city of Chicago, we saw the tragedy of more than 400 of our citizens dying during a severe heat wave.

No nation can escape this danger. None can evade its responsibility to confront it.